

Tough Times

Vol. 4 No. 7 / December 2015

It's the BRAMPTON Blue Jays



Once the Big Screen shone on Garden Square in downtown Brampton the city ceased to be a suburb and transformed into Blue Jays Central. Read all about it in a byline story by Bret Sheppard on Page 3. Bret took the pictures, too.

Single parent, one child, receiving Ontario Works

An extra dime a day!

People living on an income provided by Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program got a raise of about one per cent in November.

That's an extra dime a day for a single mom (or dad) with one child, thanks to Ontario Works.

Total income for a single person with one child is now \$1,062, up \$10. It includes a shelter allowance of \$609.

Doesn't sound like much?

If you are single and don't have a child to care for, you get \$681 total to pay the rent, buy food, look for a job, and everything else. That sounds like – and is – even less.

The rates are set by the Ontario government, and this is what one member of the Legislature told *Tough Times*:

"The recent increase to social assistance in Ontario will still leave families in dire need when it comes to paying the bills. A single parent with one child will receive an increase of only \$10 per month if they are on Ontario Works. If they are on ODSP the increase is \$12 per month."

"In both cases this is an increase of less than 1% while the cost of living continues to go up."

"The Liberal government claims they have a poverty reduction strategy, yet families on social assistance, already struggling to make ends meet, only see themselves fall further behind."

The speaker is Monique Taylor, MPP for Hamilton Mountain and New Democratic Party critic for Community and Social Services and for Children and Youth Services.

Turn to Page 8 for a complete list of raises in social assistance, and further commentary.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Down-Turn Abbey
Free dental care
Food fixings
A free piano

| | | |
|---|--------------|----|
| 2 | OW in detail | 8 |
| 5 | We need more | 9 |
| 7 | Good reads | 10 |
| 6 | Police beat | 11 |



Have a happy holiday!



Did You Know?

PEEL POVERTY ACTION GROUP

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) is open to every individual and organization in Peel Region that cares about what poverty does to people.

It provides a safe place where people who are cash-poor and those who try to help them are encouraged to speak out – and Tough Times is part of that safe place.

The Group's mandate is to advocate for people in need and to educate the public about poverty issues.

Membership is free. PPAG meets at 9:30 a.m. the second Thursday of every month (except July and August) alternately

in Mississauga at the Newcomer Centre of Peel, 160 Dundas Street West, at Confederation Parkway;

in Brampton at the John Howard Society, 134 Main Street North, just south of Church Street.

2016 meetings

Brampton: Jan. 14; March 10; May 12; Sept. 8; Nov. 10. **Mississauga:** Feb. 11; April 14; June 9; Oct. 13; Dec. 8. (subject to change) | ppag.wordpress.com

Homeless: The Video

Spaces and Places: Uncovering Homelessness in the Region of Peel is a 15-minute video in which homeless people describe their experiences.

A team from PPAG including a once-homeless person, will show the video to a group on request. There is no charge.

To book a showing contact ppagactiongroup@gmail.com. Allow about 45 minutes for the video and discussion.

The video was made by a team from York University, in cooperation with the Social Planning Council of Peel, financed by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Download at:
<http://ppag.wordpress.com/spaces-and-places-video/>



Down-Turn Abbey

Random chats in a community kitchen

Looking up, calming down

Things are looking good for Wayne. He's living in a storage unit but he will soon move into a one-bedroom apartment. He's got a job in an auto body shop, which brings in money and he enjoys the work though he's a mover by trade. These developments are new to Wayne and he says he owes it all to an Anger Management course. He says: "I used to get mad and yell and scream at people. Now if I get mad I walk away, or think about it. I calm myself down."

Changing the world

He's a young 21. He says: "I'm studying social work at Seneca College. I want to change society. I want to help people, I want them to be happy, and I want to give them hope." His hobby is writing lyrics for Rhythm and Blues about love, heartbreak, life situations, the future, it's what he does when he's not at school or doing homework. He also volunteers at a Brampton charity. He does some data entry, helps in the kitchen. Then he says: "I facilitate an Anger Management course."

Daycare dilemma

I'm a single mom and when my daughter is 12 next year, she will be too old for day care. Kids get bored at about that age. She is not mature enough to stay home on her own. I'm not sure what I will do. I work in a clothing recycling plant and I don't want to quit.

Getting older

My husband worked every day for 35 years – then he passed away. I sold our house because I couldn't look after it by myself and now I live in a condo. It's really nice. I don't want to drive at night any more, or in slush and snow.

Enough for food

I starved myself for a week so I could buy food for my daughter.

Matthew

RE-VISIT:

Tough Times had three items on the front page of its October 2015 election issue.

It said
NO MORE
CARDING
which the

Ontario Liberal
government now promises, so *Tough Times* got that right.

It showed a street sign to which someone had applied a sticker so it read STOP HARPER. And he's been stopped.

And it said Vote NDP.
Well...
Two out of three ain't bad.

(The street sign was on Bidwell at Bancroft, just east of Creditview in Streetsville. The sticker was gone before election day).



ToughTimes

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We encourage and welcome volunteer writers, reporters, artists, cartoonists, photographers, distributors and sales folk to join Tough Times.

Please email letters to: toughtimestabloid@gmail.com

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Tough Times distributes 10,000 copies, throughout Peel Region.

Target audience is people experiencing homelessness, using food banks and soup kitchens, people who are struggling, plus faith groups, social service agencies, trades unions, business people, and the general public.

To advertise in Tough Times:
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Phone: 905 826-5041
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Advertising rates: (colour included)

Business card: \$90

1/16 page: \$100

1/8 page: \$155

1/4 page: \$240

1/2 page: \$430

3/4 page: \$600

Full page: \$755

A full page is approximately 10 inches wide by 12 inches deep = 120 square inches. E&OE

THE PLACE TO BE Blue Jays Central in downtown Brampton

BY BRET SHEPPARD

Throughout the summer, the attraction at Garden Square in downtown Brampton was the new big screen, a great place for people to meet and enjoy great movies on Saturday and Tuesday nights.

Besides the movies, the big screen showed live sporting events, such as the final of FIFA's Women's World Cup soccer and live Blue Jay games – a great way to watch a game for people who don't have access to cable.

As the season progressed and especially after the Blue Jays made several key trades, the team soared to new heights, flying into a playoff spot then rocketing past the New York Yankees. With the Blue Jays taking off like they did and getting into a pennant race, the crowds got larger and the big screen showed more games. It turned into a carnival. It was like being at the game.

You had to get there early to get a seat or as a note on the screen says, "Don't forget your lawn chair." When Josh Donaldson hit a game-winning home run during the last weekend of the season to catapult the Blue Jays into the playoffs, the crowd went wild.

Come October and the first round of the playoffs began with the Blue Jays facing off against the Texas



You don't have to be in downtown Toronto to enjoy The Blue Jays. You can watch it with your family and friends on a big screen at Garden Square in Brampton and it's for free. (Tough Times photo by Bret Sheppard).

Rangers, all the games were shown and it was the place to be. People came from all walks of life – rich folk, people struggling to eke out a living, families. It was like being at the Roger's Centre, but a whole lot cheaper, and no worries about parking. And you still had hot dogs, popcorn, pop on sale. Starbucks did a brisk business, tables on the patio at The Works restaurant were packed, games were available for the kids to

play, and the patio at The Rose provided the best seat in the house.

Alas, all good things come to an end. The Kansas City Royals sent the Blue Jays away for the season though not without a good fight.

A visit to Garden Square with the crowds was time well spent – a time to forget our struggles, enjoy each other's company and watch the game.

Can't wait till next year.

Mississauga Furniture Bank expands its reach

From humble beginnings in a garage back in 2010, Mississauga Furniture Bank (MFB) now occupies a 2500 sq. ft. warehouse and has expanded services beyond Mississauga to include Halton and Peel Regions.

"We are the only organization in the area whose mission is to provide basic household furnishings to people who are trying to rebuild their lives in a home of their own. By acting as a hub between donors and social agencies, we are able to connect families in need with furnishings for their homes," says Laura Reeves, past chair and founder of MFB.

Clients are referred to MFB by community shelters, faith-based organizations and social agencies. "To date we have delivered more than 4,000 pieces of furniture to those in need. Not only does our program help families, but we also divert furniture and home furnishings which might otherwise go to landfills," Reeves reports.

"Cash-poor families lucky enough to get housing may find themselves living in houses with no furniture," she says. "They must sleep and eat on the floor and exist in a barren place. These are conditions not even experienced during their shelter living. But furniture banks can fill that gap with practical comfort."

MFB will soon include sheets, pillow-slips and linens in its supplies, thanks to local hotels who donate gently-used surplus materials, local seniors who volunteer to sort, label and package them, and Ontario's Seniors Community Grant Program which supports not-for-profit community groups that help seniors stay connected.

To volunteer with the Bedding and Linens Sorting Program, email: laura@MississaugaFurnitureBank.org

Don't Go Hungry.



If you are struggling to make ends meet, have to choose between paying rent or buying food, or have more bills than income... The Mississauga Food Bank is here to help you.

Anyone in need and living in Mississauga can use a neighbourhood food bank or other member agency regardless of age, sexual orientation, race, religion, gender or immigration status.

Visit www.themississaugafoodbank.org/getfood
or phone 905.270.5589 to find a member agency near you.



Peel New Democrats THANK ALL VOTERS for sharing democracy in 2015

**Adaoma
Patterson**
for Brampton West



**Michelle
Bilek**
for Mississauga—Erin Mills



**Farheen
Khan**
for Mississauga Centre



**Rosemary
Keenan**
for Brampton Centre



**Harbaljit
Singh Kahlon**
for Brampton East



**Ali
Naqvi**
for Mississauga East—Cooksville



**Amarjit
Sangha**
for Brampton South



**Fayaz
Karim**
for Mississauga—Streetsville



**Dianne
Douglas**
for Mississauga—Malton



**Eric
Guerbilsky**
for Mississauga—Lakeshore



The New Democratic Party has vigorous and growing organizations in every riding in Peel; join us by phoning 416-953-5569 or emailing mbilek@live.ca

Fitter fangs for free

On Jan. 1, 2016, the Ontario government integrates six publicly-funded dental programs for low-income children and youth into one new Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program, making it easier for eligible children and youth to get free dental care.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care estimates that 70,000 more children and youth will be added to the current number receiving dental care through this new program. In Canada, three out of every five children ages six to 11 have or have had tooth decay. Untreated, this could lead to pain, infection, difficulty eating and difficulty concentrating in school.

Children and youth can enrol in Healthy Smiles if:

- they are 17 years of age or younger
- they are residents in Ontario
- family income is \$22,070 or lower for one child, \$23,740 or lower for two children, and so on.

Visit: ontario.ca/page/get-dental-care

Children who have urgent dental conditions such as pain or swelling but whose family income is over the Healthy Smiles guidelines may be eligible for a Healthy Smiles Emergency Essential Care program.

Want to join Healthy Smiles? Go to a Region of Peel office to check that your child qualifies and staff will help you enrol. If you are already registered, you will be automatically enrolled in the new program so check your mail in the New Year for a package with more information.

Children already receiving dental benefits through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program will be automatically enrolled in the new Healthy Smiles program for the benefit year.

Newcomers to Canada may apply for Healthy Smiles even if they do

Do you need someone speaking Punjabi, Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, to help you? Phone Punjabi Community Health Services at 905 677-0889



Thumbs up! for good dental care. Various government programs for dental care are being merged to take care of more Peel youngsters. Read how Healthy Smiles are brightening more young people. (Photo supplied)

not have tax documents. If eligible, children will be enrolled. If not eligible, dental care may still be provided through the Region of Peel.

Services include free dental screening and preventive services for eligible children and youth aged 17 and under.

- A dental screening involves a visual check of your child's mouth by a Region of Peel dental hygienist. Your child may be screened in Peel's elementary schools or at one of our dental clinics.
- Preventive dental services, including cleanings, fluoride and sealants, can be provided by a Peel Public Health registered dental hygienist if your child is eligible. We also provide information on proper brushing and flossing, and healthy eating

Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT)

If your child has an urgent need, the CINOT program offers free dental

treatment for eligible children 17 years and younger. The CINOT program will be integrated into the new Healthy Smiles program on Jan. 1, 2016.

For more information or to book a dental screening appointment for your child at a Region of Peel dental clinic, phone Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700.

Clinics are available in Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon, plus a dental bus that travels within Peel, plus temporary dental clinics in various neighbourhoods.

There's care for adults, too.

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides basic dental services, plus additional services if your disability, prescribed medications or prescribed treatment affect your oral health. An Ontario Works program helps people who are in financial need and offers some basic dental care. Children over 18 may be able to get dental coverage through Ontario Works discretionary benefits. Peel has a special program for seniors, but it is limited and there's a waiting list.

To find out if your children are eligible for free dental care, or if you are a senior, phone Region of Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 www.peelregion.ca/dental for more information.

For updates on the new Healthy Smiles Ontario program effective Jan. 1, 2016, visit: www.ontario.ca/page/get-dental-care

NORTH PEEL & DUFFERIN Community Legal Services

■ Free legal services for low income residents of Brampton, Caledon and Dufferin County

■ Problems with your landlord?

■ Is your rent subsidy threatened?

■ Was your application for Ontario Disability Support Program benefits denied?

■ Problems with Ontario Works?

905-455-0160 Toll Free from Dufferin 1-866-455-0160 npdinfo@lao.on.ca



क्या आपको हिन्दी बोलने वाले व्यक्ति की मदद की ज़रूरत है?
तो पंजाबी कथ्युलीटी हैल्प सर्विसेज़
(Punjabi Community Health Services)
को 905-677-0889 पर फ़ोन करें।



ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ?
ਤਾਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ ਹੈਲਪ ਸਰਵਿਸਿਜ਼
(Punjabi Community Health Services)
ਨੰ 905-677-0889 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।



کیا آپ کو کسی ایسے شخص کی مدد کی ضرورت
ہے جو پنجابی بولنا جانتا ہو؟
پنجابی کمیਊنٹੀ بਿਲਟੇ ਸਰਵਿਸਜ਼ ਕو ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ
905-677-0889



உங்களுக்கு தமிழ் கலைக்க
தெரிந்த ஒருவரின் உதவி
வேண்டுமா?
அமையுங்கள் 905 677 0889

FOOD ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Can't reach a food bank? Sai Dham delivers

Sai Dham Food Bank, based in Malton, is distributing non-perishable food to people who have disabilities, and to frail and older seniors with low income in Mississauga and Brampton. The food – enough for a month – is delivered by volunteers direct to your doorstep and there's no charge.

To receive home delivery, you must live in Mississauga or Brampton, prove you are 60 or older, of limited income, and that you have a disability.

As well, Sai Dham will supply – but only once – individuals and families undergoing a food emergency.

Sai Dham is located at 7140 Goreway Drive, Mississauga, close to Derry Road East.

For more information, phone 905-956-2646



Know Your Rights @ Work Workshop

- Are You Covered by the Employment Standards Act
- What is Employment Insurance & Do I Qualify?
- Under What Grounds Can I File a Human Rights Case?

For answers to these questions and many more sign up for one of our free in house sessions taking place the 4th Thursday of every month from 2:00—4:00.

For more information or to book into one of our sessions please call **(905) 696-7444**



United Way
Peel Region

Labour Community Services of Peel

989 Derry Road East Suite 403
L5T 2J8

From the ground up

Food farm run by volunteers

Seva Food Bank, an initiative of Sikhs Serving Canada, is answering the challenges of food security, poverty reduction and economic renewal in Peel.

It tries to provide culturally appropriate and personally acceptable food to families using its food banks – and it is succeeding.

Lack of fresh fruit and vegetables is a problem for food banks. So the World Sikh Organization began an organization called KarmaGrow, to grow produce.

A pilot project in Caledon in 2014 resulted in two tonnes of fresh produce becoming available to local food banks.

This year, Seva Food Bank and KarmaGrow launched a Peace Garden in Brampton – a two-acre plot at The Gore Road and Castlemore to grow strawberries, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplants, leafy greens and similar. Volunteers and four interns worked on the project starting in June.

Once veggies were ready to serve, volunteers from Seva, KarmaGrow, Good Food Brampton, Knights Table, Eden Food Bank (now Eden Food for Change) and Mississauga Food Bank harvested and distributed goodies and supplied them to food banks.

Some produce was sold to the public – kale, chili peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplant and zucchini – all



Volunteers make sure these goodies grow in a Peace Garden in Brampton, and food banks ensure the harvest feeds needy people all over Peel.
(Photos supplied)

grown without the use of pesticides. Proceeds from the Farmers' Market stall go to help food banks.

The success of the farm is ensured by dedicated volunteers, interns and staff, who come from different faiths and backgrounds, practising different cultural farming methods.

The farm grows knowledge along with vegetables.

Thanks to Sara Fazal, Sarpreet Kahlon and Kushvir Tut for information.

A public piano

BY FRANCINE SAMPOGNA

In a corner of Knight's Table is a used upright piano.

What is different about this piano and all the other pianos in all the public places in Brampton and especially church?

This piano is unlocked!!

There is no other place to use a public piano.



Francine Sampaogna at Knights Table's piano
(Tough Times photo)

improve.

I saw and heard a little two-year-old Mozart which totally blew my mind.

Once I heard the most beautiful sound and there was a gentleman playing the sweetest thing I ever heard in my life.

I asked him if he had a degree in music – he said no and he had no lessons but he played since he was nine, just sat in front of a piano and played with it – as opposed to play it.

I am always on it – funny I can compose at any level but I am in preschool in reading music – I am taking piano and guitar lessons privately and vocal at Kennedy Road Tabernacle choir.

One of my greatest passions is music, a bond with my dad and mom through music. We were very poor growing up but my dad made sure we had a stereo in the house and my mom bought a piano which I had to sell for rent money when I was married with children. I got a great deal on it – two guitars at Pawn Kings, and a trumpet as I used to play trumpet in high school.

Good fresh food for \$10 a box – and it's worth twice that

Eden Food for Change is the new name of the Eden Community Food Bank, now expanding from its base in Meadowvale.

Eden Food for Change (EFFC) says it is offering real value to Mississaugans. Two years ago, it began supplying boxes of fresh produce to Meadowvale residents – some of them users of Eden food bank, but many of them friends and neighbours who recognize a bargain when they see one. EFFC now serves more than 500 families who spend \$10 or \$20 for a box of goodies that EFFC says is worth double.

It's called the Fresh Produce Box program, and it is open to everyone in the community.

Boxes come in two sizes – \$10 for small, or \$20 for large. EFFC says \$10 buys a \$20-\$25 value and \$20 gets a \$35-\$45 value.

No membership fees are charged, and there's no registration. Boxes are delivered to pick-up spots on Fridays, so place your order not later than Thursday at 4 p.m. This is how:

- Online at www.edenffc.org/fresh-produce-box
- By telephone at 905-785-3651
- In person at 2-3185 Unity Dr. (403 and Winston Churchill, beside Erin Mills Twin Arena)

If you miss the Thursday deadline,

phone 905-785-3651 after 10 a.m. on Friday, and if any boxes are left over, you will be phoned just before 4 p.m. Friday and have 30 minutes to collect your box.

You pay for your box on pickup, and must collect it on Friday.

State your preferred pick-up location when you place your order:

- 2-3185 Unity Dr. (front door), between 12 noon and 4 p.m. (close to Erin Mills Twin Arenas)
- 4 Caroline St. in Streetsville, between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. (between Queen and William Streets)
- 3535 South Common Court, behind South Common Mall, between 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- 3570 Colonial Drive, just north of Colonial Drive and The Collegeway, between 6:15 p.m. and 8 p.m.
- Sheridan Centre (2225 Erin Mills Parkway), in the Community Room of Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services, between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

There's no penalty if you forget to pick up your box. But since the Fresh Produce Box is a non-profit program, absorbing the cost of forgotten boxes challenges its future. Let's not lose it. Pick up your box.

And you can buy boxes for relatives, friends, colleagues, or extra boxes for yourself. Just remember it's cash only, no debit cards, credit cards, or cheques.

Can Eden Food predict the contents of its boxes? No. Eden Food For Change's chef goes to the Ontario Food Terminal Friday mornings looking for good produce with a high nutritional value. If a good buy arises suddenly, he can take advantage of it.

If you don't know what some of the items are and are doubtful about using them, there's the Take One, Leave One box. Or connect with other Fresh Produce clients or your neighbours – they may be full of great ideas; look for new recipes online; talk with our Chef at Eden Food For Change; try something new!

Just to keep the record straight...EFFC buys all its produce at the Ontario Food Terminal – the same place as most grocery stores and food vendors. The Fresh Produce Boxes never incorporates donated food from any source.

How do we make money?

The Fresh Produce Box Program is a non-profit self-sustaining program. \$9 out of every \$10 buys produce to fill the boxes. The remaining \$1 is put toward operational costs.

City of Brampton FOOD & TOY DRIVE

Supporting the Brampton Food Sharing Network and Toys for Tots campaign.

November 20 – December 18, 2015

Drop off your non-perishable food donations or new, unwrapped toys at City Hall or any Brampton Community Centre, Library or Fire Station.

Thank you for your support!
We're working together and making a difference in our community.

905.874.5321 (3-1-1)
www.brampton.ca



BRAMPTON
Flower City
brampton.ca

OW & ODSP Rates and OCB amounts as of October 2015

The 2015 Ontario Budget increased Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates. The increases start on the October 30 cheque for both OW and ODSP.

The chart below shows the current (as of October 1) and new (as of October 30) Basic Needs and Maximum Shelter amounts for different family types. It also shows Ontario Child Benefit amounts, because the OCB is an important part of the total amount of income that people on OW and ODSP who have children get each month. All the children in these examples are under age 18.

| Family Type | Before Oct / Nov 2015 | | | | After Oct / Nov 2015 | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------|----------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------|
| | OW | Basic Needs | Max ¹ Shelter | OCB | Total | Basic Needs | Max ¹ Shelter | OCB |
| Single | \$280 | \$376 | \$0 | \$656 | \$305 | \$376 | \$0 | \$681 |
| Single Parent 1 child | \$339 | \$602 | \$111 | \$1,052 | \$342 | \$609 | \$111 | \$1,062 |
| Single Parent 2 children | \$339 | \$655 | \$222 | \$1,216 | \$342 | \$662 | \$222 | \$1,226 |
| Couple | \$463 | \$602 | \$0 | \$1,065 | \$468 | \$609 | \$0 | \$1,077 |
| Couple 1 child | \$463 | \$655 | \$111 | \$1,229 | \$468 | \$662 | \$111 | \$1,241 |
| Couple 2 children | \$463 | \$710 | \$222 | \$1,395 | \$468 | \$718 | \$222 | \$1,408 |
| ODSP | | | | | | | | |
| Single | \$619 | \$479 | \$0 | \$1,098 | \$631 | \$479 | \$0 | \$1,110 |
| Single Parent 1 child | \$762 | \$753 | \$111 | \$1,626 | \$774 | \$753 | \$111 | \$1,638 |
| Single Parent 2 children | \$762 | \$816 | \$222 | \$1,800 | \$774 | \$816 | \$222 | \$1,812 |
| Couple ² | \$905 | \$753 | \$0 | \$1,658 | \$917 | \$753 | \$0 | \$1,670 |
| Couple 1 child | \$905 | \$816 | \$111 | \$1,832 | \$917 | \$816 | \$111 | \$1,844 |
| Couple 2 children | \$905 | \$886 | \$222 | \$2,013 | \$917 | \$886 | \$222 | \$2,025 |

1. Shelter amounts are maximums. If actual shelter costs are lower, the lower amount will be paid.

2. All the amounts for couples on ODSP in this chart are for couples where one person has a disability.

Tough Times thanks the Income Security Advocacy Centre for permission to reproduce this table

Could YOU live on this?

BACK TO THE FUTURE Social assistance – 20 years on

It's 20 years since Conservative Mike Harris became premier of Ontario and slashed social assistance (now Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) by 22%.

Pre-Harris, single people having a hard time got \$663 a month from the government to help them survive. Cut that by 22%, and *Tough Times'* math says you had to live on \$517 a month. About \$150 less. That's some pay cut.

Twenty years on, annual increases in social assistance have brought us back to 1995 numbers, and as of October 30, 2015, social assistance for a single person is \$681 a month – in cash terms, slightly more than where we were in 1995.

But not really. Inflation has had its way with social assistance and cut the cash value almost in half, with food prices alone up 107%.

And it's only the numbers that have taken 20 years to climb back up. The real-life facts are still in the basement.

One of the troubles with poverty is it affects more people than those who are surviving it.

That was evident when people on social assistance met in July at *Knights Table* soup kitchen in Brampton.

They said clearly that social assistance payments trap them in poverty, that you can't find a place to live in Peel if all you can pay is the shelter allowance; that getting through the month is a challenge. And they complained about the social workers whose job is to help them.

Some social workers are kind and helpful, they said. Others are not. There's a lack of respect for people on social assistance, although "you need recognition of what you are going through." Some caseworkers don't return phone calls. Some are able to get more allowances for their clients, while others don't seem able to find extra for clients who believe they are similarly qualified.

Thanks to publicity about the July meeting (*Tough Times* carried reports close to verbatim) senior social assistance staff have acted, and the Region of Peel believes better things are on the way.

Social assistance recipients are ready for confrontation in Peel. A meeting in July has led to change. Now, they plan a campaign to get more improvements.

Another dozen staff have been hired to ease the caseload; more staff are assigned to applicants not yet on the social assistance lists so allowances are available faster; senior staff have talked with frontline workers about responses to clients – though that's a two-way street, with one client reporting in July that she "sometimes let them have it."

Senior staff want dissatisfied clients to complain. Ask to see a supervisor, then a manager, then on up the seniority scale.

But the real problem is that the money is not enough to live on. The allowances have not been adequate for 20 years, probably longer.

Frontline caseworkers often take the blame, simply because they are there. But it's not their fault.

The dollar amounts of social assistance are set by the provincial government at Queen's Park.

Members of the Provincial Parliament were elected in October 2014.

Nine represent Peel ridings. Seven are Liberal which is the governing Party, plus one Progressive Conservative and one New Democrat.

They are paid a minimum \$116,550 according to the 2014 Sunshine List, but only Harinder Takhar in Mississauga-Erindale receives that little. Everyone else gets more. Even the minimum is nine times more than your single mom (or dad) has to provide food, shelter, clothing, and loving care for one child. In fact, it's more than anybody on social assistance receives no matter how large the family or how hard-pressed they are.

People on social assistance want to talk to politicians, explain to them that allowances are too low; that soup kitchens and food banks are essential to their survival, but that their lives should not be that way.

If you are on social assistance or care about people who are, and would like to know more about possible political action, send your name, phone number, and email address to toughtimesabloid@gmail.ca

We'll be in touch.

HERE ARE THE "EXTRAS"

When someone having a rough time with money signs on to Ontario Works, they also sign on to a list of Rights and Responsibilities.

The Rights are few: You can bring someone with you when you meet your caseworker; Ontario Works will tell you in writing of any eligibility or financial decisions and the reasons for them; if you disagree with any decisions, there's a review process.

Responsibilities include: You may be required to attend an employment information session; depending on your level of education you may have to take a literacy test, but not if you have a learning disorder; repayment of benefits in some circumstances involving ODSP and assets; meeting your caseworker every three months to talk about "employment assistance activities" and once a year

to discuss finances; you must "respond promptly" when told your worker wants to talk to you, if your circumstances change, if you plan to leave Ontario for a while or if your income changes; and finally "respond promptly" if you receive a request for information or a form to complete.

The same piece of paper lists benefits:

First, an allowance for basic needs and shelter (see *Page 8 opposite*), a drug card, and employment assistance.

More possible benefits:

- Up to \$500 if you get a full-time job (30-plus hours a week) and need help with the costs of going to work;
- If you start a new job for less than 30 hours a

week, or take part in an employment assistance activity, you may qualify for advance childcare payments, travel costs, work boots, work clothes and uniforms and other necessary work-related expenses;

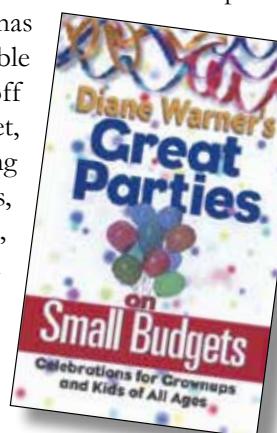
- Basic dental and vision care is provided for dependent children, and possibly for you as well;
- Cash help for special diets for medical conditions, pregnancy, breastfeeding;
- Help for diabetic supplies, surgical supplies and dressings, approved medical transportation of \$15 or more a month;
- Guide dog benefits;
- Help with moving expenses, energy and water conservation measures, assistive devices, wheelchairs, inhalators;
- A transition child benefit.

Filling Stockings: Saving Money

A HOLIDAY GUIDE TO STRETCHING CASH

FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS, parties, gifts, far too many expectations from young and old...when you don't have a big budget, what can you do? Well, with planning and creativity, a little money can go further and do more. Find some great ideas on how to save money this December in books at your local library.

Need to host a party? Diane Warner's **Great Parties on Small Budgets** can help you make cost-saving choices for parties for all ages. This book has fun and affordable ways to pull it off on a small budget, including everything from the invitations, to the decorations, entertainment, and party menu. It includes party plans and tasty yet affordable recipes for beverages, snacks, appetizers, adult fare, and children's party foods.

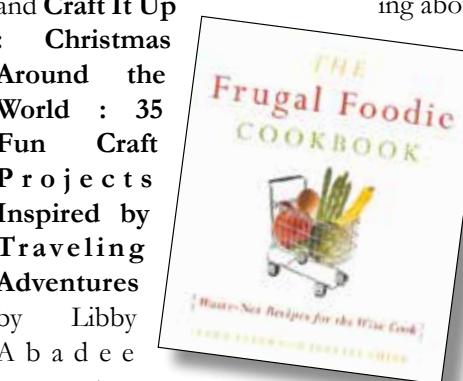


library, but some of them have you in mind instead of just the ingredients. Canadian Living's **The Affordable Feasts Collection: Budget-Friendly Family Meals** is a cookbook that helps home cooks stretch their grocery budget without sacrificing flavour or quality. Recipes are family-focused, with options for both day-to-day dinners and special occasion meals.

The Frugal Foodie Cookbook: Waste-not Recipes for the Wise Cook by Lara Starr features recipes like "Exponential Chicken" that stretches the bird over five different courses! With hundreds of dishes and expert advice, this cookbook helps readers live well and eat better.

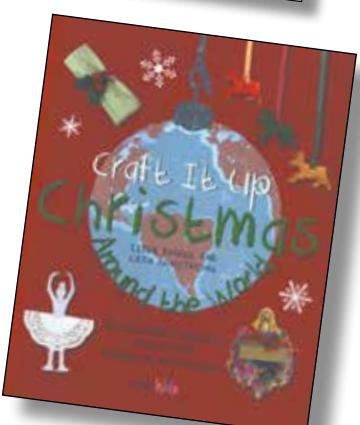


Just thinking about the food prep takes up a lot of time and energy. But there are other fun things to do in the month of December. Decorating can be ridiculously costly or homemade and meaningful. **Fun Christmas Crafts to Make and Bake: Over 60 Festive Projects to Make with Your Kids** by Anni Rigg and **Craft It Up** by Craft It Up : Christmas Around the World : 35 Fun Craft Projects Inspired by Traveling Adventures by Libby Abadie are two books on fun and beautiful crafts that will involve all



members of your family, teach new skills and promote learning about other cultures.

And lastly, you will feel the pressure to give. **Gourmet Gifts: 100 Delicious Recipes for Every Occasion to Make Yourself and Wrap with Style** by Dinah Corley is a book that can help. No need to brave the malls when you can make unique and valued gifts in your kitchen at low cost! The recipes range from simple to sophisticated, including chapters on Small Tokens, Big Batches, and Penny Wise for budget gifts, as well as level of difficulty and prep time.



May this December be a season of peace for you and yours.

Laura Bilyea,
Librarian, Mississauga
Library System



Hepatitis C

Treatment, Care & Support Is Available

You can be at risk if:

- Sharing of personal care and hygiene items such as razors, toothbrushes, clippers and scissors with someone living with hepatitis C
- Sharing needles used for body tattoos and piercings. Re-using and sharing tattoo ink and ink pots
- Sharing drug equipment such as needles, filters, tourniquets, water, syringes, cookers, alcohol swabs, acidifiers
- Receive blood and body organs that have not been screened for hepatitis C. Even in Canada, if you received blood and organ donations before 1990 you may be at risk.
- Involved in medical procedures including immunization in hepatitis C endemic countries

Contact:

Bloom Clinic
40 Finchgate Blvd. Suite 224
Brampton, ON L6T 3J1
Phone: 905-451-6959 | mail@bramaleachc.ca

Call today for information or
to book a free test.



Bloom Clinic

POLICE BEAT

The carding controversy

Peel police have been stopping members of the public, questioning, and recording information about them on a database, even though the police are not investigating a particular crime. The practice is called Carding or Street Checks.

Members of Peel's Black community complain that Black youth are unduly singled out for carding and are intimidated by it.

Peel Police Services Board has told Peel Police Service to conduct a "full review" of carding practices. Public meetings are under way.

About 30 people attended a recent meeting at Square One in Mississauga. A dozen uniformed police officers were there. Participants included police volunteers, professional facilitators, representatives of organizations such as the Black Community Action Network, Peel Poverty Action Group, Peel Coalition Against Racialized Discrimination, and



others. There were no Black teenage men to join discussion.

Police advertisements for meetings state: "Street checks are a valuable intelligence gathering investigative tool which can help police solve crime and keep our community safe."

Forming a Black group to advise police

Peel police are setting up advisory groups to help their diversity relations officers get to know the community. Advisories will share ideas, discuss community concerns about policing and other topics.

Police report that the latest advisory is from and for the Black community, with organizations including the Black Community Action Network, Congress

of Black Women, the Free for All Foundation and Black individuals from various organizations, invited to take part.

Diversity officer Detective Lori Blashuk reports:

"We have a really good cross-section of the community we serve. We would like to cover the Region geographically – Brampton and Mississauga – as well as consult individuals who work within the community in areas such as youth, business, school boards, ministers or pastors, community advocates etc."

The Black advisory met in November.

A participant told Tough Times: "Carding is still a challenge, but members recognize that conversation must continue in order to improve commu-

nity and police relations."

Want to be part of the discussions?

Police say that an effective advisory committee is about 20 people – then everybody has a chance to be heard. Blashuk reports that the Black community advisory is full for the moment. But vacancies will occur.

You can get on the waiting list by sending a note and a short bio to Peel Regional Police Diversity Unit, 7750 Hurontario Street, Brampton, ON L6V 3W6

Drive sober and safer

Peel's police want to keep drinking drivers off the road always, and make extra efforts over holiday periods. More police will be on duty until Saturday January 2, 2016, watching for drinkers at the wheel.

Inspector Paul Pogue, officer-in-charge of Road Safety Services in Peel, said: "Impaired driving is no accident. It is one of the leading causes of criminal death in Canada that can be avoided by planning ahead."

So if you want to imbibe during the holidays, take along a designated driver who won't drink and will drive you home safely.

EDUCATION: A debt sentence

BY NATALIE GARRISON

Education should not be a privilege for the upper and upper-middle classes, nor a form of oppression for the lower and lower-middle classes. Yet with young people struggling to pay off tuition loans, students of lower and lower-middle classes may choose to defer from the educational opportunity of university.

This autumn, Ontario post-secondary students faced yet another spike in tuition fees. Even when adjusting for inflation, tuition costs have quadrupled from 1990 to 2017. The monetary amounts of scholarships have not increased enough to make a dent in these students' "debt sentences".

According to a recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, between 1989 and 2009, the amount provincial governments provided has decreased by 28%. Provincial governments have been contributing less while tuition costs

more, thus burdening students with increased financial responsibility.

For students, more expensive tuition means more loans to pay off.

Student debt creates two problems:

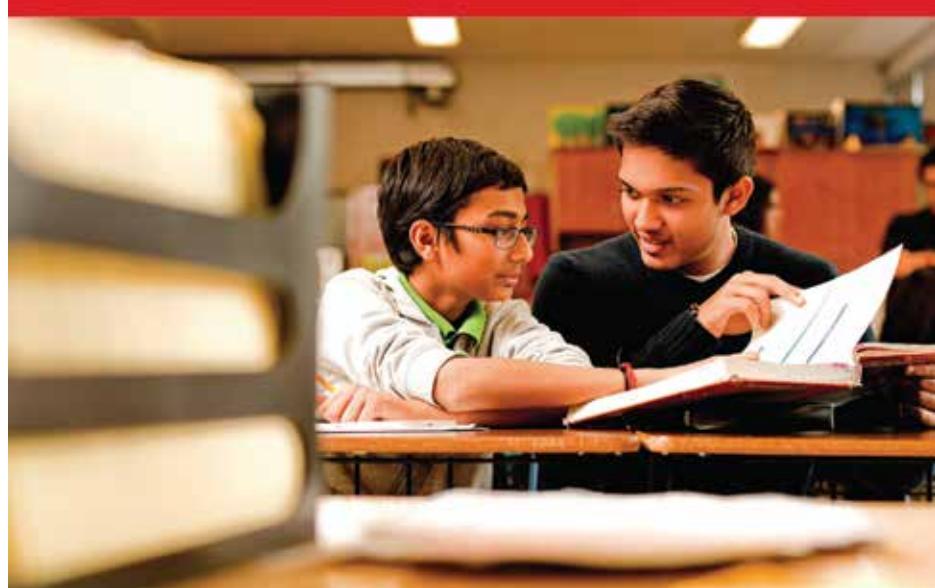
First, lower-middle class students are borrowing at high interest rates and entering the workforce with bank accounts in the negative.

Second, lower and lower-middle class students are opting out of attending university – making student debt a deterrent to upward social mobility. Further, in a depressed economy, there is little hope of finding sustainable employment to pay off accumulated loans.

Tomorrow's Canada will struggle to transform itself into a more inclusive society if opportunities for upward social mobility are deterred due to class oppression.

Brampton resident Natalie Garrison is studying Social Justice and Peace at King's University College, London, ON.

Behind every changed life is someone who made it happen.



You can be that someone.
Get involved at unitedwaypeel.org



United Way
Peel Region

Together, we are possibility.



Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy

Know the Facts



#povertyfreepeel



The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy strives to create a community where everyone works together to build a poverty-free Peel.

web: www.povertyinpeel.ca

e-mail: poverty@peelregion.ca

Twitter: [@peel-poverty](https://twitter.com/peel_poverty)



Affordable and Accessible Housing

The waitlist for affordable housing is on average

5.3 YEARS

SOURCE: Peel Annual Housing System Report 2015

33% Peel residents spending

MORE THAN

30% of household income on housing

SOURCE: Peel Annual Housing System Report 2015

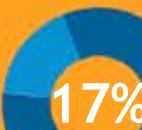


Income Security

17,000

Peel households receive social assistance

SOURCE: Peel Annual Housing System Report 2015



of Peel residents are living in poverty

SOURCE: Tax Filer Data, 2011



Affordable and Accessible Transportation

High transit costs limit the ability of residents to participate in:

EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION SOCIAL INCLUSION

SOURCE: Affordable Transit Pilot Program in Peel

In Peel, cost of a monthly transit pass is

6.5%

of minimum wage monthly salary

SOURCE: Peel Counts 2011



Economic Opportunities



SOURCE: Employment Growth in Peel - Peel in 2035, Can You Imagine?

Youth unemployment in Peel rose to

18.9%

SOURCE: Labour Market Trends and Emerging Issues - BICE, 2014



Food Security

Children made up **51%** of the visits to the Mississauga Food Bank's member agencies

SOURCE: The Face of Hunger in Mississauga 2014 and Canadian Hunger Count 2014

2 MILLION

Canadian households report being food insecure

SOURCE: Enough for All: Household Food Security in Canada 2013- Conference Board of Canada